

THE *Dan Smoot Report*



DAN SMOOT

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ISRAEL—PART I

Palestine is a region of some 10,000 square miles (about the size of New Hampshire) at the south-eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. It is the Canaan or Promised Land to which Moses led the children of Israel who fled from bondage in Egypt. Many centuries passed, however, before the Jews built a strong, national state in Palestine.

For a brief time at the beginning of the 10th century before Christ (during the reign of King David), the Jewish nation included in one dominion all of Palestine (and a little more). But before long, the nation had split into two Hebrew kingdoms: Israel, the larger of the two, occupying most of Palestine north of Jerusalem; and Judah, a diminutive kingdom which included the city of Jerusalem and some contiguous territory. Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. One hundred and thirty-five years later (587 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. The Babylonian Captivity began, and the kingdom of Judah vanished.

The Maccabees established a new Jewish nation in Palestine in the second century, B.C., but it lasted only 79 years.

For the next 2000 years, Palestine was a province or protectorate of various empires. Since the 7th century A.D., Palestine has been occupied largely by Arabs.

When the Ottoman Turks captured Egypt in 1517, Palestine became a province of the Ottoman Empire, and remained in that status for four centuries.

In the late 19th century, the Zionist movement emerged in Europe and the U.S. The purpose was to colonize Palestine with Jews from Europe and elsewhere until there would be enough Jews there — controlling the wealth and industry of the land — to create a Jewish nation.

Actual colonization (by a few European Jews, financed by the fabulously wealthy Rothschild family) began in 1883. International political Zionism, as a movement to reclaim Palestine for the establishment of

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a Jewish state, was formally organized four years later, in 1897. Since then, the movement has been largely financed and directed by American Jews.

Simultaneously with the emergence of Zionism, Arabs in Palestine were developing a strong sense of nationalism, yearning to throw off the Turkish yoke and to establish an independent Arab nation.

At first, there was little conflict between Zionism and Arab nationalism — primarily because an insignificant number of Jews chose to immigrate to Palestine. In 1914, for example, after 31 years of Zionist colonization, 94% of the Palestine population was still Arab.

When World War I began in 1914, Turkey became an ally of Germany. On August 30, 1915, the British promised to support Arab independence for all Arab lands (including Palestine) within the Turkish empire, if Arabs would support Great Britain's war against Turkey. Arabs revolted against Turkish rule on June 5, 1916; and Arab guerrilla forces were organized to support the British military campaign against the Turks.

But the British were also making deals with Jews — not because of any military assistance Jews could give in Palestine, but because of the enormous wealth, power, and influence of world Jewry, especially in America.

In November, 1917, the Earl of Balfour, British minister of foreign affairs, issued the Balfour Declaration, giving a British pledge to world Jewry that a "National Home for the Jewish People" would be established in Palestine, with a proviso that the religious and civil rights of other sections of Palestine's population were to be safeguarded. Winston Churchill later (in 1922) asserted that the Balfour Declaration merely intended to support the idea of a Jewish *home* in Palestine and that the creation of a "wholly Jewish Palestine" was never contemplated. The British also later asserted that their 1915 promise to Arabs did not contemplate Arab political control of Palestine.

Whatever the intent of the British, Arabs helped the British in World War I because they thought they had the British promise to support Arab political control of all Arab lands, including Palestine; and the Zionists considered the Balfour Declaration a promise to support the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine.

In December, 1917, British military forces, with the help of Arab guerrillas, wrested Southern Palestine from the Turks. Arab guerrillas were subsequently organized into an Arab national army, which helped the British smash the Turks in 1918. This was the deathblow to the old Turkish empire, and it ended Turkish control of Arab lands.

Following the cessation of military action (October 30, 1918), the British placed the head of the Arab national army in charge of the military administration of Syria and much of the surrounding territory. The British army administered Palestine and adjacent areas.

In 1923, the League of Nations mandated Palestine and Iraq to the British as protectorates, and mandated Syria and Lebanon to the French. The Palestine mandate incorporated the Balfour Declaration, provided for increased Jewish immigration into the country, and stipulated that Jews should be encouraged to settle on the land.

With their technical skills, hard work, and enormous financial support from world Jewry, the Jews, in the relatively limited areas they colonized, accomplished more in a few years (irrigating land, creating industries, building cities) than Arabs had accomplished in centuries.

Arabs — knowing they could not compete with these able and industrious aliens who had almost limitless financial backing from abroad — became hostile. Arabs felt they had been betrayed by the League of Nations. They regarded the alien Jews coming into the Arab homeland as shock troops of Western imperialism, whose intent was to subjugate Arabs in their own land, as they had been subjugated by the Turks for 400 years.

Hostility between Arabs and Jews deepened in the mid-1930's, when Nazism in Germany stimu-

lated large-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine. Before 1932, the British mandatory government had never admitted more than about 5000 Jewish immigrants a year. In 1932, 9533 Jewish immigrants were admitted; 30,327 in 1933; 42,359 in 1934; 61,854 in 1935.

The influx of aliens into a small, desert country with a primitive economy created intolerable problems. Between 1936 and 1939, native Arabs staged several rebellions against the mandatory government. Arab guerrillas committed acts of terrorism against Jews, and Jewish guerrillas retaliated in kind.

Hostilities subsided in the latter part of 1939, after the British imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration — and after many of the young militants, both Jews and Arabs, had enlisted in military units under British command to fight nazis in World War II.

On November 3, 1942, the British defeated the Germans at El Alamein in North Africa, thus putting an end to German ambitions in the Middle East. Immediately afterward, a secret Jewish army was formed in Palestine; and bands of Jewish guerrillas spread death and terror throughout the Arab population. The Jews got their arms and ammunition by thefts from British Middle Eastern forces. Jewish leaders officially expressed disapproval of the lawlessness and terrorism, but did not cooperate in bringing the lawbreakers to justice.

In 1944, both Republican and Democrat parties (bidding for the big Jewish vote in New York) promised U.S. support of the Zionist demand for unrestricted Jewish immigration into Palestine.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt publicly expressed sympathy with certain Zionist aims, but also gave Arabs assurances which they regarded as U.S. commitments not to support any Palestine program objectionable to Arabs.

On March 3, 1945 (after a trip to the Near East), Roosevelt said a Jewish state in Palestine could be established and maintained only by military

force. On April 5, Roosevelt wrote a letter to the King of Saudi Arabia, confirming an earlier personal promise that the U.S. would not support the Zionist aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. A week later, Roosevelt died. Within a few days after Harry Truman succeeded to the presidency, the Secretary of State (Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.) briefed him on Palestine.

The position of the U.S. State Department was the same as that of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff — namely, that the oil and strategic location of the Middle East made the area vital to U.S. interests; that Arab governments and populations (totaling more than 100 million people) were traditionally friendly toward the U.S.; that U.S. support of the Zionist program in Palestine would alienate Arabs and drive them into the Soviet orbit. Stettinius warned Truman that Zionists would put heavy pressure on him to support their aims.

The Egyptian prime minister wrote President Truman directly, saying:

"It is greatly to be regretted that persecutions of the Jews in certain European countries . . . should have been seized upon by certain political elements to advance the politico-racial theories of Zionism and to appeal to the world at large for the support of their program. Unfortunately, the brunt of their effort has concentrated on Palestine where the Arabs, who, throughout their history, have shown great tolerance and even hospitality toward the Jews, are the innocent victims. . . . Why . . . one small nation of 1,000,000 people living in a very small territory should be forced to accept in 25 years immigrants of an alien race up to nearly 50 per cent of their own number is hard to understand. . . .

"Now, the guests at the Arab's table are declaring that . . . they are going to bring in large numbers of their kinsmen, take over all of his lands, and rule to suit themselves."

Truman assured the Arabs and his own State Department that he would keep Roosevelt's promises with regard to Palestine. At the same time, he

was demanding that the British immediately admit 100,000 European Jews into Palestine.

In his memoirs, Truman says:

"My efforts to persuade the British to relax immigration restrictions in Palestine might have fallen on more receptive ears if it had not been for the increasing acts of terrorism . . . committed [by Jews] in Palestine. . . .

"The Jews themselves . . . [were] making it almost impossible to do anything for them."

Concerning Jewish pressures on him, Truman says:

"I do not think I ever had as much pressure and propaganda aimed at the White House as I had in this instance. The persistence of a few of the extreme Zionist leaders — actuated by political motives and engaging in political threats — disturbed and annoyed me. Some were even suggesting that we pressure sovereign nations into favorable votes in the General Assembly."

Nonetheless, Truman continued pushing the British to lift restrictions on Jewish immigration into Palestine. He says he acted not in response to Jewish demands, but out of compassion for the suffering of Jewish refugees in Europe who did not want to return to their nations of origin. Truman also says he felt a responsibility to implement the Balfour Declaration of 1917 — though he never explains why an American President should be bound by a British promise which the British themselves were denying.

Unable to find a solution satisfactory to Truman, the Jews, and the Arabs, Great Britain eventually referred the Palestine problem to the UN.

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution sponsored by both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. According to the resolution, the British mandate over Palestine was to end not later than August 1, 1948; independent Jewish and Arab states were to be formed not later than October 1, 1948; and an international

administration was to be set up for the Jerusalem area.

Meanwhile, terrorism continued in Palestine. The worst incident occurred on April 9, 1948, when a Jewish terrorist band murdered all inhabitants (men, women, and children) of an Arab village near Jerusalem.

Soon thereafter, the British said they would end their mandate and withdraw from Palestine by the middle of May, 1948. A special session of the UN General Assembly was called. The U.S. supported a plan for a UN trusteeship over Palestine; but on May 14, 1948, Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel. Eleven minutes after this proclamation was made in Palestine, the White House in Washington announced U.S. recognition of the new State. The U.S. delegate at the UN was caught still arguing the virtues of the trustee plan when Truman acted.

The day the new state of Israel was proclaimed, the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 began.

LATER: Details on the three Arab-Israeli wars since 1948, commentary on contemporary events, and suggestions about what the U.S. should do now.

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